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REVIEWS.

The Psychology of Socialism. By GUSTAVE LE BON. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1899.

THOSE who are familiar with the author's earlier works, *The Psychology of Peoples* and *The Crowd*, will find little that is new in his latest effort. He belongs to the group of Frenchmen who almost despair of their national and racial civilization, and find in the individualism of the Anglo-Saxon the only healthful and promising force for the future of society. The moral of the present work is that socialism is the legitimate working out of the weakness of the Latin society and can be combated successfully only from the standpoint of Anglo-Saxon individualism. Socialism is defined through the elements which are common, according to M. Le Bon, to all theories :

All would invariably have recourse to the state to repair the injustice of destiny, and to proceed to the redistribution of wealth. Their fundamental propositions have at least the merit of extreme simplicity: confiscation by the state of capital, mines, and property, and the administration and redistribution of the public wealth by an immense army of functionaries. The state, or the community, if you will—for the collectivists now no longer use the word state—would manufacture everything, and permit no competition. The least signs of initiative, individual liberty, or competition would be suppressed. The country would be nothing else than an immense monastery subjected to strict discipline. The inheritance of property being abolished, no accumulation of fortune would be possible. (P. 28.)

Under various rubrics the author shows that all these tendencies are inherent in the Latin nature. The modern Latin is quick of intelligence, spontaneous, but weak of will; capable of sudden outbursts of energy, but incapable of long-continued expenditures toward distant goals, unless indeed he be under the guidance of some overpowering leader, under which the Latins may accomplish, as they have, the greatest achievements. He feels his weakness and constantly looks for control to the state. The state constantly increases its surveillance, until, if we may believe the author, private enterprise in industry and commerce is almost rooted out in France. Constantly increasing governmental control chokes out the individual effort which is found in England,

America, and Germany. Private corporations are almost taxed out of existence, and tend therefore to pass into the hands of the state. The whole spirit of the civilization is to multiply direction and control, for the Frenchman is inherently averse to taking responsibility. Immense complexity of business methods and multiplication of the personnel in all undertakings result, and in turn make individual management impossible, and with this, successful adaptation to new conditions, rapid and effective transaction of business, and economical procedure. The necessary failure under these circumstances forces business enterprises to look for continually increasing state aid, until the natural conclusion would be the absorption of all in the hands of the collectivity, as the railroads have already been absorbed. Thus Latin society is the natural soil out of which socialism springs, while, on the other hand, the inevitable weakness, the loosening of all the cords of energetic activity, the rooting out of all initiative and progress, which the author is convinced must result from the inauguration of any socialistic state, may be illustrated, in embryo at least, in the present French conditions. The book is a reciprocal criticism of France and socialism. The criticism of socialism is not in any sense novel, and is sufficiently indicated above. The illustration from present French conditions is interesting, but if it is possible to judge the accuracy of his generalizations of the French situation from his statement of that in America, large deductions must be made. As a picture, however, of the weak side of French character the drawing is effective and striking. As an indication of the repression of individual initiative and the control that the socialistic programist calls for, the illustration from French conditions is most instructive.

But the programists represent but one phase of socialistic theory, and one which, as M. Le Bon recognizes, is passing in Germany and has quite passed among that brilliant coterie, the Fabian Society, in England. The socialists are becoming opportunists. They are losing confidence in any delineation of the future condition of society—any “vision given in the mount”—and are coming to clearer consciousness of the force that lies behind socialism; and with this consciousness come heightened insight into many conditions of modern times and better standpoints from which to criticise such movements as the organization of labor. For example, it is socialistic thought and thinking that opens the minds of the laborers to the fact that the wage and working-day are the result of all the forces and conditions out of which the fabric of civilization springs, and cannot be the simple dictum of employers and

managers. It is socialistic thinking that has led to the appearance of the trained expert who represents the labor union in conference with the employer, and recognizes the common situation between employer and employed upon which alone any arrangement or compromise can be made. Socialistic thinking may be different in France and England, but it is the same great force and cannot be studied in the camp of the programists alone. It is coming to represent, not a theory, but a standpoint and attitude. As the author says, it is a reaction against individualism. The other phase of conduct is rising above the threshold of consciousness—the community phase. Naturally it formulated itself first in dogma, and still lives in part in dogma. But its reality lies in the essentially social character of all conduct, and the gospel, according to socialism, is the recognition that all self-seeking has and must have a social end, if it belongs inside a social organism.

What society is struggling to accomplish is to bring this social side of our conduct out so that it may, in some conscious way, become the element of control. Now, as an analysis of this great, as yet inchoate, movement M. Le Bon's book is inadequate. For to him socialism is bound up with a creed and a program, and stands or falls with these symbols of faith. It is true that Latin definiteness of conception and the Latin feeling for and dependence upon the state tend toward the program-socialism, and reciprocal analysis of the program and the Latin social consciousness is valuable and edifying. Instead of being the end, however, this is but the beginning of a movement that must be appreciated in its strong as well as its weak side to be appreciated at all. There is, perhaps, little need of emphasizing this, but there is food for reflection in the attempt at psychological analysis of the use of socialistic dogma, which prefaces the treatise. I am not at all sure that I have fully grasped M. Le Bon's theory, but I take it to be something like the following :

Our conduct springs from impulses which belong to the ancestral soul. These springs of conduct are the heritage of countless generations, which may be referred to as the few but deeply founded beliefs which underlie our civilization. But, though they take the form of beliefs in the dogma of the church and state, it would be a great mistake to assume that they are the products of ratiocination, or are in any sense subject to reason as regards our recognition of their truth or falsity. And as they represent the heritage of the past, that which has been handed down by the race, they stand for the common impulses

of men, and are, therefore, altruistic in the most profound sense. This may be seen and experienced in the crowd, whose motive, according to the author, is always unselfish, however brutal and crude the means used.

The whole process of rational intelligence consists in bringing new experiences into this inner core of our natures and interpreting them from this standpoint. This is the process of perception and that of reason as well, if I understand the author. The conclusions he draws from this are, first, that the process of perception must be always and unavoidably a deformation of the object. For it is perceived only in so far as it is forced into the group of beliefs which we have inherited from the gray past. Still we are equally unable to recognize the deformation, since our process of perception is exhausted in this act. M. Le Bon fails to explain what psychologic process it is which enables him to run down this deformation of all our known world, nor why this capacity which places him, at least in this case, quite above the deforming phase of perception should not become the heritage of all. His second conclusion is that the conscious rational process is always egoistic over against the altruism of the unconscious impulses. The egoism seems to be involved in the attempt to make the universal impulse fit the immediate exigency of the individual. What the individual is vividly conscious of is that which he must do for his own preservation and success; and yet he can grasp the situation only so far as he deforms it through interpretation by his altruistic impulses. If perception, then, consists in forcing all experiences upon the Procrustes bed of inherited impulses and beliefs, reason consists in the consciousness of the conflict between the experience in its individual demands and the altruistic impulses which still must dominate the conduct. Now, it is just here I take it that the belief—the dogma—comes in. It is a mediation between the individualistic trend of fighting for one's own existence and advantage and the race impulses that beneath the threshold of consciousness irresistibly bear the individual upon the current in which he is but a ripple. Thus the belief in a New Jerusalem would be the compromise between the demand for satisfaction of individualistic passions and life itself, and the society and family impulse that calls for complete self-abnegation. In the New Jerusalem this dualism is to be overcome. Of course it must follow from this position that reason is always egoistic, that the conception of the new Jerusalem and kindred conceptions are always selfish. They are an attempt to put the individualistic, egoistic meaning into the altruistic

race impulse. Rational belief must be always a calculation of the payment which the individual is going to get later on for acting his part as a simple member of the species. Again we would ask how it is that M. Le Bon has written a long book presenting with great wealth of argument the proper course for Frenchmen to pursue. This undertaking, which would repudiate any reward in this world or the next, is surely a rational one, and yet not an egoistic one. It rises quite above the plane of the fight between the altruistic and egoistic element, and presents rational motives for conduct which are found in a conscious and sincere love of one's country. If in this case reason is able to get down into the hidden sources of action, to put to itself the task of clarifying these from their own moral standpoint, with no reference to the egoistic demand, why may not the crowd even eventually reach this position in which the reason in its exercise is not necessarily egoistic. In a word, the very existence of the book denies the author's sophistic epistemology and hedonistic ethics. If perception were a necessary process of deforming the world, M. Le Bon could never have discovered it. And if reason is universally egoistic, while our disinterested conduct must always be, as such, unconscious and unanalyzed, the worthy purpose of this book could never have been rationally conceived or discursively carried out.

It is evident at once where socialism comes in. It is a late gospel, according to Marx, by which a bridge is laid between the race impulse and the demand for individual life and gratification. The promise of revenge upon the hated rich, the equalization of fortunes that is to bring comfort and gratification in this world, if not in the next, reconciles the crowd and the disaffected man to immediate life. It is a new religion — but a dangerous one; for its realization is laid in this world and calls for the torch, the guillotine, and the dagger. Strangely enough, the author who says truth or falsity has nothing to do with the acceptance and maintenance of religious beliefs and dogmas, is sure that no sooner has socialism been tried than the crowd will reject it. Though belief has the strange power of carrying along unreconcilable propositions as glittering truths, the socialistic dogma is sure to break down when put to the test.

Now, it is true that our perceptions are conditioned by our own natures and their past, and it is true that reason attempts to bridge the break between the more or less unconscious habit and the immediate situation which calls for its readaptation. But, so long as we are able to draw out of our natures and their past experience scientific rules for

conduct, this conditioning does not mean hopeless deformation, and as long as the reason is able to state the new rule for conduct in just as universal and social a form as the old, it is not compelled to work solely in the interest of a selfish ego.

Or, to make the statement concrete and applicable to the present instance, because we can never get outside of our experience to look at it, it does not follow that we cannot discover the method and process of that experience. No one knows what he is going to do, judged by results, for the result is too wide and far-reaching for him to estimate, but he may know that he is acting rationally. We may depend upon our interpretation of the present in terms of the past, so far as method is concerned. The engineer does not know the full value and meaning of the bridge he is building; no elevation will tell him that. But he knows *how* to build it. While we are perfectly willing to have the unexpected happen, we expect science, physical and mental, to tell us how to behave in its presence. Furthermore, we state the law, the universal, in terms of society, and its infraction, the exception, the particular, in terms of the individual. But that is only till we can either modify the law or enlarge the individual. Thus, while reason is bridging over the chasm between society and the individual, it is forming a new society or a new individual, and in either case is making a real identification. Here, also, this takes place, not by a statement of what either society or the individual is going to be, but by finding the point of identity between them, and controlling the process of reform by sacrificing nothing valuable in either. It is only the method we can be sure of, not the result.

Now, I take it that this is but an abstract way of saying that we have, in general, given up being programists and become opportunists. We do not build any more Utopias, but we do control our immediate conduct by the assurance that we have the proper point of attack, and that we are losing nothing in the process. We are getting a stronger grip on the method of social reform every year, and are becoming proportionately careless about our ability to predict the detailed result. We may compare the programist to the concocter of the old-fashioned farmer's almanac, and the opportunist to the member of the signal service who is satisfied with a meteorological method that may control immediate conduct. If I have rightly interpreted M. Le Bon, his psychology is that of the programist, and is as inadequate as the social theory.

The psychological problem is a real one. The author's position,

that consideration of the ultimate truth of beliefs has had little bearing upon their acceptance or non-acceptance, is justified by history. Belief has turned upon the criterion of their actually working. The historical verification of beliefs has never taken the place of their efficacy in arousing human emotion and stimulating to action. The fallacy lies in assuming that the power to call out action has lain solely in the reference to the past event or the future state. The power lies in the efficacy of these assumptions in rendering present action possible. The concepts of heaven and hell have served to arouse to action, not because men have directly sought the joys of the one or avoided the horrors of the other, but because they served to evaluate the meaning of lines of conduct. No one was ever bribed or frightened into righteousness, but the glories of the New Jerusalem and the terrors of the pit have enabled men to estimate the nature of the respective types of action, and have assisted in setting free impulses which would have been otherwise dormant. The efficacy of belief lay in the firm conviction that certain types of conduct were admirable and others despicable, and men accepted the dogmas which aided in vivifying and deepening these convictions. It is a further question, that we must here pass over, why men wanted to estimate their conduct as good and bad; but the tendency was there. This tendency eagerly seized upon the dogmas which aided in accomplishing this evaluation and setting free the energy that was then ready for expression. Here lies the psychological problem. A belief is accepted because it organizes our conduct and sets free energy that is otherwise inhibited. This is the so-called subjective evidence that has always borne the weight of all dogmatic institutions. On the other side, the belief lays claim to objective verification. Though it is the subjective evidence that convinces, the conviction demands acceptance of the objective occurrence, and when this is successfully attacked, the belief is for the time being undermined.

It is evident that the supposed objective reality serves a real end in the psychological mechanism. For example, the belief in the probity and worth of candidates of one's own political party and the objective reality of its platform makes political activity along many lines possible. The support of men and measures can be undertaken with vigor and enthusiasm, and all the social energy bottled up in the partisan finds free expression. Undoubtedly the consciousness of the free, uninterrupted expenditure of the energy is the real ground for the vividness of the belief, and will presumably resist any argument that may be brought against it. If, however, through overwhelming and striking

proofs, the opposite of the partisan's contentions be forced upon him, the result is the distressful inhibition of the activities that had heretofore such free expression. The objective reality of the dogmas and beliefs may be said, therefore, to represent the fixed lines of habitual reaction along which alone free expression of energy may take place. Our beliefs are, so to speak, the projection of our habits, and represent the possibility of action. Thus the social habits of the partisan may be such that he could not deliberately support the candidacy of one whom he recognized as a scoundrel. His belief in the party nominee is the projection of this habit of social reaction.

Furthermore, the beliefs may organize and unite various lines of activity which otherwise would be dissipated and severally wasted. It is in this function of the belief that we recognize the program. All the reactions against the innumerable discomforts and distresses of life are organized and directed in one channel by the detailed picture of a state of society by which all these distresses and discomforts will be avoided. The necessity of such a program will be in proportion to the lack of organization of the life of the people to whom it appeals. We find, therefore, that it is an early stage in the development of any new phase of social conduct, or else represents the very lack of organization of the people, which results from dependence upon an outside control. This type of organization is, however, more or less artificial and unreal. The various discomforts, for example, to which men are subject in poverty and distress are to be met, not by the particular reactions which each element of distress calls forth, but by a higher principle of social organization ; *e. g.*, not by the immediate devouring of beefsteaks and installing of comfortable furniture, etc., but by the hard fight for higher wage and shorter time, with the corresponding increase in the meaning of life which comes with this struggle. The belief in the program means that every time the shoe of poverty pinches an accession of spasmodic energy accrues to the propaganda, This is a crude proceeding compared with organic interest in a labor union that is directed toward immediately possible achievements, with a vivid sense of the present reality of the means used and their necessary parity with the methods of the employer. Gradually the sense of community of interest between both arises, and with it growing interest in the actual struggle and a feeling of intense meaning that does not have to be projected into the future to get reality. Such an interest in the immediate struggle, with the prospect of attainable results-organizes conduct far more effectually than the detailed mental picture

that comes in answer to the different stimuli to complaint. There is the same specific weakness in the program that inheres in the day-dream as a motive for action. In the nature of the case the interest in the immediate process tends to take the place of the devotion to the program. Nor is this a phenomenon that is confined to socialism. In Christianity there is a constant transfer of attention from the dogma to the interest in immediate practical effort toward the amelioration of suffering and wrong.

The psychological inefficiency of the programist lies in the necessity of continually diverting the attention from the task in hand to the mental picture of the program-state. There result divided attention and great waste of force. In the nature of the case the opportunists must become a stronger, better organized force because their interest is centered constantly upon immediate problems. They are not forced to draw their power from a distance, nor does their organization of interests represent detached activities. From the psychological standpoint it is safe to prophesy the conquest of the opportunist over the programist, wherever they come into conflict.

GEORGE H. MEAD.

Social Laws: An Outline of Sociology. By G. TARDE. Translated from the French by Howard C. Warren, Assistant Professor of Experimental Psychology in Princeton University. With a Preface by James Mark Baldwin. The Macmillan Co. Pp. xi + 213. \$1.25.

THE original of this little book was noticed at length in this JOURNAL for November, 1898. The translation is excellent. While we recognize a logic in M. Tarde's own arguments that makes for conclusions different from those which he draws, it would be a great mistake to undervalue his services at the present stage of sociological thinking. If all his books could be presented to English readers in an equally genial version, the prevailing awe of M. Tarde's opinions would more promptly give place to perception of their provisional and partial validity.

A. W. S.